The University of Chicago

A HISTORY OF THE ST. CHARLES THEATRE IN NEW ORLEANS 1835-43

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE FACULTY IN CANDIDACY FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
1930

By
LUCILE GAFFORD

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CHAPTER II
NEW ORLEANS AND JAMES H. CALDWELL

Prior to the Civil War, New Orleans was almost as cosmopolitan as Chicago or New York today, and perhaps experienced annually a greater change in composition than did Philadelphia or Charleston or Boston, which, outside of New York might be termed its rivals. During the fourth decade of the nineteenth century it increased in population from a little under 50,000 to a little over 100,000.[1] A local statistician estimated the summer population of New Orleans in 1837 at 105,000 while the winter figures reached 150,000; and he accounted for the difference by the yearly departure of all who could afford it, to cooler and more healthful sections during the summer months and the cholera-fever days of early fall, and by the influx of a relative number from the North and East who spent the winter in New Orleans for business or pleasure. The people at this time represented perhaps the greatest mixture of types since the early days of its settlement. The old and regularly plotted section below Canal Street was still dominantly French; the newer portion west of Canal was, of course, English in speech and American in tone. By no means a negligible part of either section was negro, some "free men of color" but most of them slaves. Added to these, in both sections, were numbers of river captains and flat boatmen whose presence was general at all public places; and a second mixed group whose business, either by way of the general pioneering of the day or through shipping and exchange which centered in this most strategic city of the country brought them there periodically for indefinite periods. There was, as there is today, a representative portion of Spanish citizens, with a smaller lot of Germans among the fixed residents. The antagonism between the older Creole population and the English was still marked. The newspapers never cease to record the rivalry, in commerce, art, and civic enterprise, between the sections.

The city had been divided into three municipalities, each

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[1] The U. S. census for 1830 gives 46,310; for 1840 a jump to 102,193. For the latter year Cincinnati was 46,338, and St. Louis 16,469. In 1835 "the growing city of Chicago" had 4,000 inhabitants.

with its representation in the city council, each with its leaders in political and public life. The most marked growth came naturally in the region above the old canal, but the early residents reluctantly spoke of this section other than as the "faubourg St. Marie" or of its enterprises other than as "efforts." Yet the new quarter attracted its share of notice. Two aspects of its growing life received attention in the papers steadily; the council of the second municipality and the English Theatre, and they both centered in one man, James H. Caldwell.

The newspapers up to 1837, when the New Orleans Picayune was established, carried alternate French and English pages; each side emphasizing news of interest to its own readers but both giving attention to whatever was attractive or disturbing to the other, or of equal importance to the whole subscription list. Thus the theatre advertisements appeared for the Orléans in the French columns, for the St. Charles and Camp in the English, with occasional duplication in cases of unusual attractions.

These three theatres held a steady rivalry throughout the period here studied, but they did not represent the total of the city's interest in amusements. There was in the French part of town a theatre called the Marigny which catered to a less select audience than the major houses wished to attract, and there was for a time an ambitious German theatre which presented on three nights a week programs of German and English plays and music. The summer witnessed annually dramatic performances in an amusement place called the Vauxhall Gardens, and others. In addition to these more or less fixed types and places of entertainment, there were intermittent visits by Chapman with a group from his floating theatre; and frequent amateur performances on the stages of the major houses. There was throughout the period an alert group of drama lovers who not only attended the presentations of the regular houses but who actively contributed to their programs such features as occasional addresses, local hits, and appearances for charity benefits or celebrations. Such seems to have been James Rees' first connection with the St. Charles, and such was the only connection of several others, most conspicuous of whom was G. W. Harby.

Two other types of amusement were closely related to the regular theatres. Brown's Circus ran for the whole period and others came and went with the seasons. "Stunt" actors and trained animals were frequently engaged from the circus groups for the theatres, especially at times when the popularity of the ring threatened the receipts from the legitimate drama. Ball rooms, of which the famous one in the St. Louis Hotel was most typical, and of which the one later made of the Camp street theatre was a

late example, were regular institutions which were open usually for three nights each week for the masked balls of the day, and for occasional concerts and solo appearances by dancers, singers, and players.

In the mixture of its population is to be found the explanation for the city's support of all types of entertainment, and in its easy wealth the quick response to the ingenuity of the managers. Going to the theatre or opera was in New Orleans always something of a social exercise, an occasion which the reporters marked as attended by "the wit and beauty of the city," or which was applauded by a "full and fashionable auditory." The apparent balance of favor for farce, opera, and serious drama suggests the heterogeneous nature of the attendants and the necessity of offering frequent changes of program. Almost equal reference is made to the rough element in the pit and gallery, and to the elite of the boxes and dress circles.

The period 1835-43 was marked by the most pronounced rivalry between the two American theatres of New Orleans, and it represents the time of greatest trial for the French house through the introduction of opera in the English part of the city. Conspicuous in the economic history of the place and aggressive in its theatrical life, emerges James H. Caldwell, a man of will and energy, both hated and loved by his townsmen, but successful in every promotional venture. The history of the drama in the English section of the city is almost equally the record of a house and of the energy of its builder.

Caldwell was a first-rate publicity man. The New Orleans journals for the first year of the St. Charles Theatre are filled with references to his activities and reports of his plans. The erection of the biggest theatre in the south was but one of many enterprises for him. He had introduced gas into New Orleans through his first theatre on Camp Street in 1822 and had become president of the bank which grew from the gas corporation. He was a member of the city council and was always conspicuously reported in accounts of its proceedings. In the spring of 1835, just prior to the building of the St. Charles Theatre and evidently because of increasing complexity in his business, he resigned the presidency of the Gas Bank, although his name continued to head the committee in charge of subscriptions to the Gas Light and Banking Company. In the first week of May his name headed the stock holders in the proposed New Orleans and Nashville Railroad Company; and on June 17 a press article outlined his plan for paving the streets of New Orleans. The Bee of June 22 carries this paragraph which appears to have seemed to the editor the extreme move in schemes:

"Alderman Caldwell has resolved to construct bath houses. He has long kept his fellow citizens in warm water; but lest fatalities should occur from drowning, he is to have a Roper at hand, for properly executing his orders. Gas and gymnastics have thus united in warm accord."

But these activities are not to be taken as indicative of Caldwell's lack of interest in drama and the theatre. A characteristic feat is recorded in the papers of May 2, 1835 in the announcement from Brown's Circus:

"Mr. Hewlett by permission of the mayor is to appear in one of his grand entertainments containing imitations of the most celebrated actors of the world.

Part I

James H. Caldwell esquire, as Sir Charles Rackett, to whom J. H. was a servant for 5 years, and now the AMERICAN ABORIGINAL ROSCIUS! ! !"[1]

This piece of press agent's work had been preceded on April 13 by the announcement of plans for a new American theatre which Caldwell would make "one of the most magnificent and commodious in the country." Editorial comment on the day set for laying the corner stone ends by calling the "attention of our fellow citizens to the ceremony to be performed today at 10 A.M.--Considering the energy, knowledge and tactics of Mr. Caldwell we have little doubt of the success of the undertaking; and trust that the theatre will be prepared for the customary representations by November or December. We expect to give tomorrow a detailed account of the ceremony and hope during the course of the ensuing season to be able and willing frequently to compliment Mr. Caldwell on the public spirit manifested by him in the support of creditable and native performers and performances. Native talent should be preferred in every possible manner."[2] But the ceremony was evidently a quiet affair; it elicited from George W. Harby, later author of plays on local topics, "an appropriate impromptu address" on buildings and builders, notably on Caldwell's improvements in "the upper faubourg."

There was general public concern over the construction of the new theatre. Debate in the council over a permit to Caldwell for a portico in front of his building gave him publicity for days, and led to partisan comment, with the opinion ultimately in

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[1]In the summer of 1835 the managers of Brown's circus built a huge amphitheatre which continued to be a center for summer amusements during our period.

[2]The Bee, April 13, 1835.

Caldwell's favor.

Comment on the new house was slight through the summer, but the name of Caldwell was never long absent from the public eye or ear. Early in the summer he announced through a New York paper a "prize of $500 for a good comedy; and one-third of the receipts of the seventh night of its being represented at his new theatre."[1] Stimulated by this move, Caldwell's rivals Russell and Rowe of the Camp street theatre promptly announced a prize of $600 for a tragedy suited to the talents of their stock players, and Russell was reported to be in New York to engage stars for their house.

> "Mr. Caldwell also has enlisted performers and is determined to persevere with energy. We shall therefore have the competition long wished and wanted. His theatre advances rapidly in construction; and will be ready for the public in November."

The next obviously "inspired" item from the press is interesting and valuable for the facts it reveals and for their testimony to Caldwell's imperial effort toward the development of acted drama in America. The article concerns the title of founder of the drama in the Mississippi valley, and presents the rival claims of Drake and Collins and Caldwell for the distinction. The intrinsic value of it now is its record of Caldwell's successive buildings, which are there listed as follows:

> "He arrived in 1819 from Petersburg, Virginia, where he had erected a theatre the year before. In 1820 he built the present Camp street theatre; in 1822 . . . . the Nashville theatre; in 1826 the St. Louis theatre; in 1827 Natchez; 1832 Cincinnatti; and now in 1835 two theatres are building for him, one in Louisville and the great New American theatre in this city. . . . . Thus . . . . building eight theatres west of the mountains.[2] Never has any single man, we believe, done as much for the drama. . . . . Mr. Caldwell during the time the several theatres of the West were under his direction, travelled with his company of artists one year at least ten thousand miles, and performed 250 nights, himself acting the

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[1] The Bee, May 25, 1835. There is a query also as to his reasons for giving publicity to this prize in the North rather than locally. American comment throughout the period is extremely jealous for native talent.

[2] His building was extended in 1840 by the erection of a theatre in Mobile.

principal parts."[1]

Caldwell kept his name in the press all summer, but not till mid-September was the full design of his new theatre apparent, and interest seems to have been keenly stirred for the weeks just previous to its opening.

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[1]The Bee of September 4, 1835, quoting the True American, n.d.

CHAPTER III
THE BUILDING OF THE ST. CHARLES THEATRE

The house which Caldwell built stood on the south side of St. Charles street between Gravier and Poydras, with a frontage of one hundred thirty feet and a depth of one hundred eighty feet. The description reveals a building plan that would be regarded as ambitious even today, and elicits credulity for the local claim that Caldwell was erecting "the most splendid, spacious and commodious theatre in this country."[1] The veteran Ludlow reiterated this enthusiasm as late as 1880 and declared the first St. Charles theatre the "most magnificent theatre . . . . built in the South or West even to the . . . . present. . . . ." He is responsible also for the statement that Caldwell built the house "from his own means and his own credit," and notarial records still available point to the same conclusion.[2] The plan included also an adjoining hotel with one hundred guest rooms, an arcade, a restaurant, a bath house, and "a smoking divan similar to those of Paris and London." Later indications are that the arcade and divan were used for promenading and relaxation during the long waits of a spectacle at the theatre.

The theatre was one of the beautiful show buildings of its day. Its front of one hundred thirty feet balanced by a height of seventy, gained in impressiveness by being a half story higher than the two-story buildings in the block. Ten Corinthian columns supported a portico running between the second and third floors; above the portico ten Doric columns carried the decorative effect of the front up to a pediment which relieved the horizontal lines of the windows of the three floors. The front was further elaborated by lunettes over the first and third floor openings, and by

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[1]The New Orleans Bee, September 18, 1835. The London Theatrical Observer of January 25, 1836 in a brief article on this new American theatre gives its cost as $300,000, and alleges that "It is as large as Drury Lane, and far more richly decorated."

[2]N. M. Ludlow, Dramatic Life as I Found It, p. 408. Notarial Records, Book 30 in the New Orleans court house record subsequent sale of the land and mortgages on the house, but the indication is that Caldwell was the owner of the theatre to the end.

figures of the nine muses in high relief in the pediment.

Five wide doors led into a columned hall which was flanked by stairways. Each of the four inner floors had a drawing room, as had the central hall below. The nineteen boxes of the first floor were latticed and curtained in rich colors, and shut off from the corridors by mahogany doors. The boxes on the three levels had twelve chairs each. These boxes were the seats of fashionable families who usually bought tickets for the season at $1000 per box, and were the only part of the house where ladies sat. The parquet floor was nearly level but its seats were arranged to give each occupant a view of the stage. Here sat about two hundred persons, always men whose black coats and white shirt fronts were a regular feature of the spectacle of the house. Behind the parquet, the pit and pit lobby accommodated five hundred people, usually the un-dress members of the audience.

The second tier of boxes was like the first in general style and order except that the seven center loges were thrown together in an amphitheatre effect of three hundred cushioned seats for which tickets could be purchased for single performances at the price of pit seats, and like the pit was the resort of men only. Four doorways on this level of boxes opened into the grand promenade of the theatre heavily carpeted and adorned with statues.

The third tier of boxes was much like the second in plan. The entrance to the gallery, or fourth tier of seats, was by a stairway at the right of the entrance hall. This floor also had a comfortable reception room. A mixed audience usually occupied the gallery—countrymen and their belles, the women of a "certain type" frequently referred to in contemporary comments on theatre audiences, free men of color, and slaves who came with their master's permission.

The auditorium, from the stage, was an elongated semi-circle flanked by boxes. Outside, the boxes were decorated with scrolls of gold on a ground of ivory. Above these bands of woodwork on brass rods were draperies of red and blue and gold.[1] Heavy Doric columns with gilded capitals separated the boxes of the first tier and supported the second. The columns above were of iron, undecorated. The ceiling rounded into a great dome from whose center hung a chandelier which was the pride of the house.

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[1]The Courier of December 8, 1835 reprints a comment from a New York paper with the statement that the damask curtains for the St. Charles were "the most perfect specimens of ornamental decorations we have ever witnessed: the cost $4000." Caldwell selected his furnishings abroad.

This fixture, made in England at a cost of $9,000, had a weight of two tons, a height of twelve feet, and a diameter of fourteen feet. The light of one hundred seventy-five burners was diffused through 23,300 beads of prismatic glass which gave it a radiance unexcelled in any theatre of the world.[1]

Equal care for plan and equipment was manifest in the structure of the stage of the St. Charles. Across an orchestra pit twelve feet deep and running the length of the stage a proscenium arch of elaborate gilded figures rested on double Corinthian columns of gold surface with bases of imitation breccia. The outer curtain was of red moreen hung in deep folds and raised by pulleys. The stage was large; from the curtain line to the rear it was eighty-six feet deep, with nine entrances or wings on each side. The wings were so hung from the ceiling as to permit pulling them together for a smaller stage at need, and the depth was equally adjustable. The fly pieces from the high ceiling could be raised from their usual height of twenty feet to forty. This adjustability of proportions made it possible to present intimate scenes, as in farce, or to represent as in one case, a spacious hall forty feet high, eighty-two feet deep and ninety-six feet long with rows of columns and scores of lights. The stage was lighted by gas drops. Nothing is said of footlights and it is probable that they were not employed, as earlier experiments with gas lights in the faces of the actors had proved unsatisfactory. On the stage floor were two green rooms "completely furnished." A stairway on either side of the stage led to the dressing rooms, twenty-six in number, the rooms for the wardrobe, scenery, and supplies.

The following tabulation is a condensed record of the interior proportions:

Elevation of front	70	feet
Front line	130	"
Depth	80	"
Distance of center box from curtain	78	"
Greatest width of box circle	71	"
Height of Pit boxes	9	"
Height of 1st tier boxes	11	"

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[1] Such is the claim, perhaps justly made. Gas had been first used in a London theatre in 1817 and the English makers of this chandelier no doubt represented the best skill of the day. An interesting account of the early steps in gas lighting in England is given in E. B. Watson's recent book, Sheridan to Robertson, pp. 92-3.

Height of 2nd tier boxes	11 feet
Height of 3rd tier boxes	11 "
Height of 4th tier boxes	10 "
Height of ceiling from center of auditorium .	56 "
Width of orchestra	12 "
Length of orchestra	48 "
Width of stage, wall to wall	96 "
Width of proscenium	53 "
Height of center of arch from proscenium . . .	44 "
Width and depth of boudoirs	8 x 10 "
Depth of boxes	9 "
Width of pit and parquet stairway	30 "
Width of box stairways	9 "
Height of colonnade	33 "
Width of semi-circular halls	12 "
Width and height of principal doorway . .	6 x 9 "
Parquet entrances from arcade	15 "[1]

The architect for the St. Charles was M. Mondelli who continued to serve as Caldwell's principal artist through the history of the house.

The publicity which Caldwell had secured for his opening developed interest to a high point and it is evident that friends and enemies alike were eager to see the outcome. For a time Richard Russell and his friends were vicious in their condemnation of Caldwell for trying to establish a rival to the old Camp Street Theatre. In the spring of 1833 when Caldwell assumed the contract for lighting the city with gas he had leased the Camp for five years to Russell and Rowe, and announced a farewell to the stage. The two seasons following had been fairly successful for the American house and Caldwell had received from the lessees the $12,000 annual rent stipulated. He had also had a hand in engaging some of the talent of the theatre. But he evidently was restless out of his favorite milieu and longed to be in full lead again.

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[1]Condensed from an article, probably written by Caldwell, in Rees' Dramatic Mirror, January 8, 1842; verified at points by the inventory of the house for a lottery announced in the True American, September 14, 1839; corroborated in many respects by accounts from spectators at the old St. Charles. A view of the interior, unmistakably of this house, but dated as of the later house run by Ludlow and Smith, hangs in the Cabildo in New Orleans now.

This feeling had led to his resignation from the gas company and to his plan for the brilliant return which resulted in the St. Charles Theatre. Russell and his supporters felt that the return was a breach of faith and made their views known with much noise in the leading paper of the town. Immediately another paper, the True American, perhaps through journalistic rivalry, became Caldwell's champion, and a contest of columns began. The claim of Caldwell was that the old house was not adequate, and that the acted drama had fallen into decay. Russell's retort showed definitely that his biggest stars had hardly filled his house and that there was no apparent desire for a new one.[1] Our subsequent record will show that the St. Charles hardly ever had a capacity audience. Caldwell's aggressive spirit may have been dreaming of imperial growth for New Orleans, and characteristically putting himself in the van of its progress, but he was in a larger way simply following a fashion.[2] Certainly his theatre was an achievement.

The last effort of the rival group was to throw out fears for the safety of the new theatre. Its warmest supporters acknowledged the problems which were all too obvious during the first nights of the season. For there were flaws. The draperies for the boxes were delayed; the house was cold; the members of the stock company were new to each other and unaccustomed to speaking in so large a hall; the audience was small because people waited to get reports on the first few programs. But there were gains, many of them cues from the experiences of the initial nights. The draperies came, the lattice work between the boxes was removed when it proved obstructive, and the final effect was novel and pleasing. Ladies came in increasing numbers as the season advanced. The press took particular note of this and of the excellent discipline of the house. The lounges and recreation rooms more than atoned for the proscription against peanuts and fruit in the audience. The orchestra attracted the music-lovers, and lovers of drama found themselves pleased even if Caldwell did not abide strictly by his avowed intention to "restore legitimate drama to its rightful place." Within a month of its opening the

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[1]Letter to the Bee, quoted in the Dramatic Mirror of January 1, 1842.

[2]Large houses were a conspicuous feature of the new theatre world which developed from economic and social expansion in England, and America, during the early nineteenth century. They had great influence on the types of plays and the qualities of acting.

public, including the press of the French section, was giving its support to the St. Charles and Caldwell had the promise of a successful business.

Justification by moral intent, characteristic of the past century among writers and producers, was explicit in Caldwell's statement of aim in a letter to the public, dated November 25, 1835:

> "The temple I have built and consecrated to the drama, I shall endeavor, whilst I live, to present under the great dramatic rule 'To hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature.' Then, if to show vice in its greatest conformity, and to place virtue in its most lovely form, be an object of high importance in a well regulated community, and if the fact that all civilized nations have established and encouraged the regular drama, may be adduced as proof, the theatre cannot fail to be viewed as the most powerful engine that can be resorted to for the purpose of advancing the best interests of society, and the great and permanent cause of morals.
>
> With respect, gentlemen,
> I remain your friend and
> obliged servt,
> Jas. H. Caldwell."

The beauty and sanction of "the legitimate drama" he proclaimed at the time when his major effort was toward spectacle and music drama to capture a public which wanted only to be entertained. His inconsistency was in a fashion the enforced action of a caterer to public taste, but it was in a larger degree a reflection of English stage conditions under the monopoly. Caldwell probably was most interested in the standard, old-line plays, but he was an astute business man who offered his clientele the fare it would consume most completely and frequently. His own appearances were in the established comedy successes of a conventional era and no doubt expressed his truest judgment. The press comments on his efforts rarely failed to note the tone of his theatre as "attributable to Mr. Caldwell in his laudable intention of maintaining the legitimacy of the regular drama; and rendering his establishment not only one of instruction and amusement, but one where virtue and delicacy can enter and remain without being offended." The comfort and taste of the theatre were, they felt, matched by a decorum which made it a safe place for wives and daughters to "visit for instruction as they would a church; and for amusement as they would a private assembly. . . . . We may believe that in this respect Mr. Caldwell is truly a public benefactor." Caldwell was a born showman, who at times managed the press as well as he did his theatre.

The company which Caldwell had engaged for his new venture was quite as strong as the beauty and completeness of his house merited. It is doubtful whether a group of greater strength could be found in a contemporary theatre in America.[1] In the list were several actors whose names connote much even yet in the history of the American theatre: John Barton, Englishman of culture, an excellent actor and teacher; James G. Maeder, composer and musical director who trained Charlotte Cushman for the stage; Joe Cowell notable for comic roles, father of Sidney and Joe junior of later fame, and grandfather of the Bateman children who with him add their names to the interesting roster of actor-families in America; George H. Holland, Caldwell's secretary during the whole history of the St. Charles theatre, the comedian whose name is associated with the story of New York's "Little church around the corner";[2] Ben DeBar whose name carried on years later the dramatic enterprise established by Ludlow and Caldwell in the South; Vincent De Camp, brother of Mrs. Charles Kemble. Among women were Charlotte Cushman, leading American tragedienne of her generation; Mrs. Maeder, whose fame was made as Clara Fisher; Mrs. Bannister, wife successively of John Augustus Stone who contributed to the Forrest prize plays, and of N. H. Bannister in whose plays she often acted; Louisa Lane, who later as Mrs. Drew added to her fame as actress the role of mother to her more famous son John Drew and thus is linked to another actor-family of lengthening lineage. The company as a rule was composed of eighteen or twenty men and as many women who shifted from role to role as visiting stars created the need.

The orchestra of twenty-seven,[3] remarkable in size and training, was made up of players whose experience with other well-known companies in America and Europe fitted them to cater to the rather exacting taste of New Orleans audiences. It included two trumpets, ten violins, three violin cellos, three clarionettes, two flutes, a primo trombone, a bassoon, an oboe, horns, two contre bassas, with a director and two tenors who appeared in features.

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[1] A full list of the company is given in the appendix for the season 1835-36.

[2] The death on September 25, 1926 of Joseph Jefferson Holland, last of three actor-sons, probably marks the end of the name in American stage history.

[3] These figures are from the first season, but they represent a fairly constant fact. Later figures are hard to get.

The program of Caldwell's opening night is typical in content and format.[1] The advertisement for the day is unusual in length. Below an imposing list of the company and orchestra the block is much as follows:

"At a quarter before seven o'clock, the prize address, by
Mr. Forbes; after which the
Overture to Masaniello.

THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

Sir Peter Teazle	Mr. De Camp
Charles Surface	Mr. Barton
Joseph Surface	Mr. Forbes
Sir Benjamin Backbite	Mr. DeBar
Lady Teazle	Mrs. Maeder
Mrs. Candour	Mrs. Bannister
Maria	Miss Lane
Lady Sneerwell	Mrs. Kinlock

Between the play and the farce, the overture to 'Der Freyschutz.'

The Evening's entertainments to conclude with

THE SPOILED CHILD

Little Pickle . . . Miss DeBar

Peanuts are proscribed.

PRICES OF ADMISSION

Chairs in private boxes and parquette	$1.50
Amphitheatre boxes and pit	1.00
Free colored persons	1.00
Amphitheatre of the gallery	.50
Slaves will not be admitted without exhibiting passes from their masters; Admittance .	.50

Boxes and parquette chairs can be procured for the night on application at the box office on St. Charles street every day from 10 A.M.

Doors will be open at 6 o'clock, and the curtain will rise at 7 precisely.

Tomorrow Evening,
THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO."

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[1] In the absence of pictorial representation, it is well perhaps to give as nearly as possible the main features of the printed program.

The proscription against peanuts is indicative of slight improvement in conditions regulated against earlier in the Orléans Theatre where the ruling barred dogs, and oranges which we learn were brought to the theatre less often for consumption than for potential use as missiles against the orchestra and actors. In contrast, there is evidence, from an advertisement later and from the description of a coffee shop as the source of a fire which once threatened the building, that coffee was served during intermissions as candy and drinks are today.[1]

The prize address of the opening night had been selected by a committee of local judges who felt that the productions submitted did "honor to the poetic talents of our country."[2] What those talents were may be judged from the address, which later appeared in print:

ADDRESS

"Like the rich beam that lights the ruin's crest,
Poured from the bosom of the golden west;
O'er ancient tower and tomb-like dwelling shed,
Hallowed with life the precincts of the dead—
The Muses' ray o'er memory's realm is cast,
Startling the shadows of the slumbering Past!
Wide her domain; the Drama's spirit dwells
Where'er man's breast in joy or suffering swells;
As fair, as vast her world, as Nature's own—
The mind her empire, and the heart her throne!
The flowers of the loveliest hue and form are seen,
Less frail than those which deck the vernal green;
There foliage bends, whose grateful shade bestows
Undying calm on souls that crave repose;
There streams exhaustless flow, and fountains play,
Flinging eternal music in their spray;
And suns and skies with living lustre shine
Shedding o'er earth, a radiance half divine!

"To night her presence hallows this our dome,
Here first invoked to fix her lasting home;
Yet from your smiles she asks her welcome here,
Smiles that most nurture hope, and banish fear,
'Tis yours to give the life-bought meed of fame,
From you the sons of art their triumph claim;

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[1]New Orleans' present little theatre, Le Petit Théâtre du Vieux Carré, serves coffee during intermissions.

[2]The report of the committee Caldwell had printed in the Bee of November 25.

And, oh! the warm approval beaming now
From many a bright glad eye and smiling brow,
Like sun light glancing forth 'mid summer flowers—
May it ne'er cease, with merit, to be ours.
"May lessons here instilled be cherished long,
And wisdom's accents speaks in burning song!
Whether the breath of music wake the shell,
Binding all hearts with its electric spell—
Or Thalia lead the light and laughing train
To share the dance or swell the festive strain—
Or Tragedy sweep by, in gorgeous pall,
Or 'fold her mantle regally to fall'—
While pants the breast, or flows the heart warm tear
For deeds sublime, or sorrows pictured here—
Still o'er the mimic scene may taste preside,
And Truth, that pictures but a world more wide!
Here purest wreaths may Poetry entwine,
To light, to deck, the Drama's favored shrine;
And you ne'er blush for your applause bestowed
In this her consecrated, fair abode!
"Such dreams are ours; and gladly do we hail
The dawn which bears a hope that shall not fail—
Hope of future, in its glorious pride,
Starlike, the onward bark of mind to guide:
To speed its course— the breast of thought to fire
And with the senses, bid the soul aspire!
You too we welcome! while this dome endures,
Be here the heart's ennobling pleasure yours!
Here, where the Drama's loftiest voice shall speak,
Light every eye, and flush each kindling cheek;
While 'neath her sway each low born passion dies,
Where she shall yield the lightning of the skies!
And speed as far as shores or seas expand,
The soaring spirit of your native land!"[1]

A word seems inevitable about the small bills, or bills of the day, or hand bills, as they were variously styled. The average bill was six or eight inches wide by fifteen or eighteen inches long, printed on very cheap paper. On particular occasions the bill was doubled in width, the second half usually giving an explanation of policy or of plans in prospect. These additions were really of the nature of news column or editorial comment today. The usual bill presented the star's name in bold faced black

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[1] Rees' Dramatic Mirror, January 15, 1842, pp. 178-9.

type which varied from one-half to a full inch in height—this usually near the top—followed by the title of the play or "piece" being given. Often the names of forthcoming stars were inserted before the statement of the evening's program, though the general practice named these figures at the foot of the bill. The evening's program, which made up the body of the bill, was given in detail; the cast of characters in the play and afterpiece—or farce and opera as the case might be—with almost unvarying space to musical features "during the evening's Entertainment." Particular attention was given to arias and duettas in the operas, and to special composition in songs. For new or spectacular plays a detailed synopsis of scenes and incidents would be given, with emphasis on the appearance of the leading characters or to special effects in setting or costume. No advertisements appeared on the bills, although often comments from the press on actors or productions were placed conspicuously near the top or at the very bottom of the sheet, and accounts of costumes or other properties were given for productions in preparation. At the beginning of a season a list of members gathered for the stock company, and of stars being negotiated with, made up a section at the foot of the bill; and at any time of notable change an outline of policies or of new rules governing the house.

These bills were struck off by the afternoon press, distributed on the streets or tacked on posts for the attention of interested auditors for the evening's entertainment. The same bills were given at the theatre door in the evening. Thus the bill was at once program and means of communication from the manager to the public.[1]

Caldwell's desire to maintain decorum was indicated in a long footnote to the programs of his first week's run in the new house:

> "The proprietor is determined to keep strict order in the establishment; to put down, at every risk, every attempt to disturb the quiet and attention which ought always to be ascendant in a public assembly, but which is too often violated; sometimes by ignorant, at other times by disorderly

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[1] Mr. C. C. Titcomb of New Orleans has a collection of bills from the old St. Charles, complete almost to the day, for its period of existence. Mr. Schwartz, the previous owner secured the collection from Augustin Daly who very probably had it of Caldwell himself, for he went from New Orleans to New York and lived there till his death in 1863. No doubt he retained contacts with theatrical figures to the end.

persons, who think because they pay their money and because it is a theatre, they may make as much noise as they please. The following regulations of the city council the manager is bound to have enforced, in addition to which several rules are appended, which will be enforced by a properly organized Police force.

ORDINANCES

1st. No auditor shall be allowed to wear his hat during performances.

2nd. No auditor shall be allowed to smoke cigars in boxes or lobbies of the theatre.

3rd. No auditor shall be allowed to disturb the general audience either by knocking with sticks or talking aloud; nor shall he attempt to make any kind of disturbance without submitting himself to a fine of Twenty Dollars, to the benefit of the Corporation, for each contravention.

RULES OF THE THEATRE

No smoking will be allowed in Boxes, Lobbies or Saloons. Smoking will be confined to the Bar Rooms at the corner of the Theatre Arcade, and at the foot of the Gallery stairs. No auditor can give away his right of admission after having entered the House. Therefore checks transferred will not be rec'd. Tickets purchased for the night cannot be used afterwards, either in whole or in part."[1]

These precautions evidently won the censors for a recurrent note in the comments on the house during the season was on the taste and decorum found there and the increasing number of ladies at its performances.

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[1] I find no contemporary description of tickets, and no mention of ushers. A writer in the New Orleans Times Democrat of December 18, 1898 on customs in early theatres says that when a theatre goer purchased a ticket he received a piece of cardboard labelled "admit one," and a slip of paper with a seat number indicated; he "can't remember any ushers in those days."

CHAPTER IV
ORGANIZATION AND PRODUCTION IN THE ST. CHARLES

A. Personnel

The history of the St. Charles Theatre is synchronous with the last years of the war between the English patent houses and the sturdy new theatres which were disputing for place and building up a taste for various forms of "illegitimate" drama, and its record is typical of American theatrical history at the same time. A cross section of the St. Charles account would be a picture in little of the London theatre world under patent conditions; its titles may be found, in a large percentage of cases, in the runs of current seasons at London's half dozen new theatres, its actors were for the most part English-trained. One needs, then, to have in mind general conditions across the Atlantic during the first four decades of last century.[1]

The patent act which had been created to protect the two royal theatres, Covent Garden and Drury Lane, had limited the productions of smaller and newer houses in two ways chiefly; it had permitted them to run only at such times as the royal houses were closed, usually through the summer, or to produce at other times such things as the major houses did not put on. These prohibitions led to evasions in the introduction of new elements into old-line plays, and in time to the creation of new types. It developed melodrama, on a hint from contemporary French productions, with major stress on singing parts and elaborate costumes. In time the song element diminished to interpolated numbers, and action became the central concern. The development, about the same time, of other types of amusement for the hoi-polloi in such houses as Astley's Circus and the Olympia and Haymarket, led to the introduction of such extra-dramatic features as flying figures and stunt actors, and finally to scenes in dramas formerly lacking them such elements as trained dogs and wild horses, underworld

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[1] Caldwell's career at the St. Charles was almost exactly parallel to the last two regimes at Covent Garden before the freeing of the theatres: Macready, 1837-39; Vestris and Mathews, 1839-42.

and otherworld creatures who lived in caves and by cataracts.[1] By such means, and by ingenious changes in the more conventional material of the traditional theatres the non-patent houses grew into continuous show places and they set up such definite competition that the smug and stately "Old Drury" and its companion began to try new things. The last decade of the monopoly produced a multifarious lot of melodramas, spectacle shows, farces, and after pieces. About the same time the younger composers of opera were getting their first stage hearings on the continent, with a resultant vogue in England soon after, on the stages of the small houses quite as often as in the English Opera House and the royal theatres. Each house catered to a more or less mixed but small set of spectators, and the efforts to interest them led to every extreme of novelty, while there was constant talk about the restoration of legitimate drama. It was many years after the replacement of the Patent Act before the crystallization of types at certain houses developed the long run as it is known on the twentieth century stage, though the growth of new forms of entertainment led steadily to the development of type acting and stock roles in plays.

These were the prevailing conditions which a wide-awake manager in America would know about—and Caldwell knew London in terms of houses and actors. He seems to have sent some member of his company to England each summer, or to have had active agents on the spot;[2] and the New Orleans of one hundred thousand population was served such dishes as London's two million consumed seasonally, and often in the same vessels.

It is to be noted, however, that native plays and actors had their places on the American stage, and that in time there was a fair exchange of both with England. Within the period here studied the plays of John Howard Payne were quite as popular on the English Stage as the American, as were several of the plays of less prolific men. In the 1830's Edwin Forrest, James H. Hackett, Charlotte Cushman, H. J. Finn, and G. H. Hill had spectacular

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[1]The history of this transition is told in detail in E. B. Watson's Sheridan to Robertson.

[2]The news items suggest that Barton was in the beginning Caldwell's representative. Later when The Jewess was in rehearsal Larkin brought with him to the St. Charles the elaborate costuming for the whole cast, made for Caldwell. It is probable that James H. Hackett was Caldwell's agent after 1839 when he took up residence in London and became a booker for American producers.

runs on the stages of London. Certain foreign actors made reputations with American audiences before their debuts on their own or the British stage. This fact is most interestingly illustrated in Celeste the dancer. She had had continental applause before her American runs in 1832-35 as the greatest dancer and pantomimist of the day, when in 1837 during her first London engagement she attempted speaking parts and became the vogue in a double way. Fanny Ellsler almost defiantly came to America against advice, and added such fame to her name as to carry her to the peak of her career. They all found eager applause in America, and they liked the liberal terms America yielded them.

Consideration of Caldwell's achievement in the St. Charles concerns two major elements—the personnel of his organization and the programs which they presented. It is proposed here to consider analytically these factors, and to present for the student of the American theatre who desires details the daily record of the St. Charles in tabular form in Appendix I.

Caldwell had a gift for choosing assistants who were personally magnetic as well as competent in their offices. Several such people stand out in the record of the St. Charles, conspicuous among them George H. Holland, secretary to Caldwell and treasurer of the theatre during its existence. He was an actor of great good humor and original interpretation, apparently as popular personally as he was adaptable professionally. He did some acting each season, and was always relied upon to fill in for any role short of deepest tragedy.[1] Another was James G. Maeder whose connection is probably best described as adapter; counted on to translate the words of an opera or to re-shape its score to the capacity of the company. A third among Caldwell's aids was John A. Barton, for a large part of the time Caldwell's stage manager and one who trained many of the younger stock members in their roles. Two others whose names are memorable in American theatre history were George H. Barrett, manager for Caldwell for two seasons and an excellent actor in high comedy; and J. M. Field, an occasional poet and playwright as well as an actor. Among musicians Caldwell had two notable orchestral leaders in Willis of his first season and Jonas of his last.

The core of his organization was, of course, the stock company which usually assumed the whole output of the first weeks[2]

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[1]He was also Caldwell's agent abroad during the summer of 1840.

[2]The audience was slow in building up usually and Caldwell never risked big features or stars on his first weeks, but tried to show the strength of the stock company.

of each season and intermittently filled the evenings between engagements of stars. Caldwell maintained always a strong stock company, usually two men for heavy leads, two for singing parts, two or three women of like qualities, and one man and woman especially good in farce. Throughout the St. Charles record John Barton was the unimpeachable old man for heavy drama, in roles that range from King Lear to General Damas in the Knowles play; Vincent DeCamp was a general utility actor; Joe Cowell was employed for humorous old men, and Ben DeBar for farce parts. Added to these fairly continuous members was a succession of men whose names are part of American acting history—J. S. Browne, C. W. Hunt, John Latham. Most conspicuous among the women were Louisa Lane (later Mrs. Hunt), Mrs. Conduit (later Mrs. DeBar), Miss Verity (later Mrs. Williams), Mrs. Barrett, and Mrs. Field. The stock company usually numbered about forty members.

Throughout the seasons, which ran from late October to late May usually, actors just outside the category of stars were engaged for stays of indeterminate length, during which they were given the leads on company nights, only to be employed as complementary figures when greater luminaries were ascendant. Such were Mrs. Gibbs, direct from London during Caldwell's first season, featured in singing roles; and H. J. Finn who led in farces through the season. Such also were John Larkin, from Liverpool, who led in English opera produced by the stock company before and during the stellar engagement of the Italian troupe, and James Murdock who played heavy roles while Cooper held the boards. Among women so employed were Charlotte Cushman, used for singing roles at first and later given tragic heroines' parts; Mrs. G. H. Barrett, and Lydia Phillips who gave support to Cooper in 1836, and Mrs. Duff brought on to play opposite Edwin Forrest in his spring run in 1839, Mrs. Richardson, and Mrs. Field.

After the success of opera during his first season Caldwell made good singing voices one desideratum for his regular company; and after the vogue set by Celeste at the same time he kept in his group one or more trained dancers, such as Mlle. Rovenot in the second season's line-up, and others later.

A strong feature of his permanent staff was the orchestra which had parts in the nightly programs ranging from overtures as an almost invariable feature, to the full scores of operas old and new as the seasons passed. Benefits and special programs brought individuals of the orchestra out for solo appearances, notably Cioffi the trombonist, Trust the clarionettist, and Norton the trumpeter. Caldwell seems to have had much concern for his orchestra always, and a recurrent note in the publicity for each season asserts its strength. Almost never is there adverse comment

on the music by the reporters, but rather, suggestion for more prominence for its part in the programs.

The high spots in any season of the nineteenth century American theatres were made by the appearance of visiting stars, native and British, who moved in more or less regular circuits from London to the United States, and up and down its waterways. Stars who came to the St. Charles during the winter and spring months seem usually to have come down the river basins from runs in New York or Boston and Philadelphia; those coming in the early fall often are announced as direct from London engagements, or if they were singers or dancers, to have come by way of Havana.[1] The shifting series of these visitors to the St. Charles was not notably large during any one season but the total list includes most of the prominent names of the day, in a varied lot of entertainment, from the Greek Brothers who performed on the "cord elastique" and Levi North who did stunts with his champion horse, Celeste who charmed by the studied statuesqueness of her poses and "The divine Fanny" Ellsler who enthralled the romantic New Orleanese as she did philosophical Emerson away in Boston by the airy grace and incredible harmony of her pirouettes—to the sentimental actresses who personated such heroines as Mrs. Haller of The Stranger, Julia of the Hunchback and Pauline of The Lady of Lyons, the Mrs. Conduits and Mrs. Fields and Mrs. Ternans whose names recur, with those of women of greater scope and higher skill, Ellen Tree, Josephine Clifton, and Charlotte Cushman. Gaining a bigger name than these, some by virtue of real acting, some by great display of histrionics, is the list of actors in high comedy and the old-line tragedy—James H. Caldwell himself, John R. Scott, John Barton and George Barrett, Thomas Abthorpe Cooper and J. B. Booth—while the tempestuous Richards and Tortesas were chosen by Edwin Forrest, and by two actors now lost to fame, Fitzgerald Tasistro and A. A. Adams. There must be added to these for the less elevated but still stellar roles of popular actors of type parts three notable ones, Tyrone Power whose Irish impersonations won a vogue of long duration, and G. H. Hill and James H. Hackett who divide honors in the part of the shrewd but homespun wit of the Jonathan type. Among the comic actors of the insistent farce and afterpiece the names of H. J. Finn, Joe Cowell, J. S. Balls, and Ben DeBar are almost constant.

Child actors appear among the "stars" of the period, aside from the "Master Payne" and "Master Betty" who were really only

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[1] I find no reference to actors coming VIA the Havana Theatre. The language barrier probably accounts for this.

youthful actors at the time of those tags. Among the pseudo-prodigies at the St. Charles was "Miss Davenport" who appeared for a short run in 1839 in representations of Richard III and in a part written for her in The Manager's Daughter. This wonder child was then eleven years old and was playing with her mother and father, of the Richmond theatre. Another was "Petite Bertha" Lewis, six years old, who was starred in such roles as young Norval in Douglas, the title role in The Youthful Brigand and Fortunato in Oxberry's melodrama, Mateo Falcone. Much less indulgence must have been necessary for "Petite Carline" of the Swiss Family, dancers, who appeared in imitations of Fanny Ellsler; and such seems true from the difference in tone of the reviews. The equestrian groups all had child performers who attracted great attention by their feats. One child musical prodigy, Master St. Luke, appeared in difficult violin numbers, and during an engagement with his father in 1838 was featured as the conductor of the orchestra for an opera production.

B. Program in General

The programs offer a mass and variety not known in our day of the long run. The stock program, whether given by the regular company or by the shifting list of stars, was a lead of "sterling comedy" and afterpiece, or tragedy and farce, with an overture usually played between the dramatic pieces. When a visiting star determined the nature of the head-line piece the company came in for its part in the afterpieces, of which there are a multitude in the total record. Even in the runs of opera and dance and spectacle performers the program almost invariably ended with the lighter or more definitely amusing pieces thus kept on hand. Occasionally during these stellar engagements the farce or short piece was acted first—perhaps to gain attention in the great hall or to make the approach easy through presenting the familiar. The stock company was coached in a long list of stage classics which it acted alone or in which it gave support to successive stars. These included always some eight or ten titles from Shakespeare—the tragedies because of the opportunity for individual starring, As You Like It and Much Ado because of their feminine roles, Henry IV and The Merry Wives of Windsor for the character of Falstaff, which was acted in New Orleans by Hackett in each of his runs. Only three plays represent the early seventeenth century—Massinger's The Roman Actor and A New Way to Pay Old Debts; and Beaumont and Fletcher's Rule A Wife and Have A Wife—all of them largely vehicles for one dominant actor, though the double plot of the latter may have been an attraction. Venice Preserved is the single play of the late Restoration, while the eighteenth

century is represented in its whole sweep. There was at least one performance of almost every type of eighteenth century models from Mrs. Centlivre to Mrs. Inchbald, and the writers of the last quarter of the century mass a large proportion of the titles. Of the writers and types before 1750 there appear once each, Jane Shore, The Busy-Body, The Wonder, and the adaptation of Mrs. Centlivre in J. Barnett's Win Her and Wear Her; burlesque in Fielding's Tom Thumb, and farce in Garrick's Lying Valet. The English traditional Christmas play George Barnwell nearly always supplanted other things for that day. Plays and types from the Garrick era are represented by Home's Douglas for romantic tragedy; Garrick's adaptation of Southerne in Isabella for domestic tragedy, and comedy in his adaptation of Wycherley in The Country Girl; burlesque and satire in Townley's High Life Below Stairs, Sheridan's The Critic, and Foote's The Mayor of Garratt. These are paralleled by authors with two or more recorded performances; Arthur Murphy with two plays, All in the Wrong and The Grecian Daughter, Edward Moore whose domestic tragedy The Gamester had nine performances in Caldwell's seven seasons, George Colman, the elder, with three productions of The Jealous Wife and one of The Clandestine Marriage.[1] Sentimental drama is represented by Cumberland's The West Indian, Holcroft's The Road to Ruin, and by two of Mrs. Inchbald's heightened productions, Wives as They Were and Maids as They Are and Every One Has his Faults. Goldsmith and Sheridan have the fullest representation; She Stoops to Conquer once each in four seasons, and The Rivals five times; while The School for Scandal appeared every season, with a total of seventeen performances for the record title from the Eighteenth century. There is a notable absence of the gayer comedies of the very early eighteenth century which had been popular in the repertoire of the Hallams and contemporaneous troupes earlier in America.

There was, however, great popularity for a group of transition figures of the generation which followed close upon Sheridan—the group headed by the younger Colman. The four plays from Colman which come into this record represent his later efforts and his best comedy—The Heir at Law, John Bull, The Poor Gentleman, and Who Wants A Guinea?. Thomas Morton, his follower, with a little more of the sensational and melodramatic in materials is

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[1]The absence of The Iron Chest is notable, for its central figure Sir Edmund Mortimer was almost invariably a companion role to Sir Giles Overreach and the Shakespearean kings; and Kean was playing Sir Edmund conspicuously at this time.

much more fully represented. The secret probably lies in the famous parts his plays provided and in their suggestions of realism in reflections of the changing times, notably Town and Country, Speed the Plough, and A Cure for the Heartache.

Another transition figure seems responsible for the vogue of comic opera and operatic melodrama far beyond the limits of this period; fifteen productions of John O'Keeffe's The Poor Soldier furnished amusement for every season of the St. Charles as it had recurrently from its early employment by Wignell and Henry. Four other titles from O'Keeffe are led by Wild Oats which had six productions. His followers in the type are chiefly two; William Dimond with eight titles in thirty-six performances, some of them comic operas which have borrowed qualities from melodrama and the spectacle; most popular The Lady and the Devil, with fourteen performances; and Thomas Haynes Bayley whose nine titles had sixty-eight scheduled performances in New Orleans. Bayley carries the vogue well into the middle of the century, and two of his titles, The Swiss Cottage and Perfection, have high frequency, one twenty-nine, the other eighteen entries.

There was a vast body of stuff of more immediate appeal which Caldwell seized upon with incredible quickness for his theatre. This is illustrated in his first season's productions of plays by Sheridan Knowles, then at the beginning of his great popularity. The Hunchback, first produced three years before in London and New York, appeared three times in the St. Charles season of 1835-36; The Beggars of Bethnal Green, produced at the Victoria in 1834, appeared twice here in 1835-36, while The Wife apparently had a production in New Orleans before its performance in London.[1] A fourth play for Knowles this year was Virginius, presented during Cooper's engagement. Eleven plays with fifty-six performances gives Knowles the lead among authors of nineteenth century drama. His plays are typical of Victorian taste—prevailingly serious, persistently romantic in tone—excellent vehicles for actresses and actors of emotional taste.[2]

Next to Knowles in frequency and mass of production is Bulwer-Lytton who after little success with drama turned to fiction

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[1]It is impossible to establish such points; records I have seen suggest that the London production of 1836 was the first there. It had been in New York in 1833.

[2]Part of this popularity undoubtedly came from Knowles' acting in his own creations. During the 1830's he made two tours of the American theatres, to New York and Philadelphia but apparently not to New Orleans. He appeared often in London.

only to have his novels seized upon and adapted for the stage. Three titles loom larger than others from Bulwer—The Lady of Lyons, tremendously popular perhaps because it gave acting chances to three leading characters, Richelieu, popular with actors of old men, and Money, favored because of its theme. These three plays netted thirty-three performances at the St. Charles. Other titles based on Bulwer materially enlarge the list.

A few other serious plays of the early nineteenth century which had more or less literary value were acted because of their strong roles. Of three outstanding plays of this romantic-tragic type Milman's Fazio is oftenest listed, with second and third places held by Sergeant Talfourd's Ion and Banim and Shiel's Damon and Pythias.

In nineteenth century titles the comedy falls behind serious drama in quantity and in quality, but a few plays of more than average interest stand out. John Tobin's comedy The Honeymoon was a favorite used repeatedly in America for first night productions and on "occasional" programs because it was sure of response. Its blend of romantic sentiment with the theme of The Taming of the Shrew perhaps was the ideal compromise for an age which liked farce but was at heart sentimental. Douglas Jerrold's Black-Eyed Susan presented a domestic story through lively dialogue and amusing scenes. Jerrold's name attaches to three other plays which hover on the line between domestic comedy and farce—The Rent Day, A Hazard of the Die, and The Wedding Gown—and the promptness of the American performances after the initial London dates for each of them proves again the avidity of managers for the new and timely.[1]

The nineteenth century's contribution to the comedy of manners, Boucicault's London Assurance, came out just in time to be in the St. Charles history. The play had sixteen performances in New Orleans within the year of its English production, and was presented with the attention to details of setting and costume which the new realistic ideas demanded. It is the only one of Boucicault's plays in this record.

There were many adaptations of foreign plays, notably French material based on Scribe and Dumas, but none of striking prominence. But two plays from the German Kotzebue were enormously popular: Pizarro for its romantic material and the vigorous, heroic central masculine character; The Stranger for its sentimentalism which centered in a feminine role. One of these titles may be found in every season, and in all but one both appear.

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[1]All three produced within the year of publication: The Wedding Gown within two months of the London premiere.

Close akin to these types were dramatized novels from French and English and American sources. Victor Hugo presents one title, variously styled Esmeralda, or Quasimodo; or, The Hunchback of Notre Dame or The Bell Ringer of Notre Dame, from the novel of the third title here, made into a drama by Edward Fitzball.[1] Byron is represented by Sardanapalus, made into a play by Charles Durang, and acted by James W. Wallack for its heroic possibilities. Bulwer-Lytton, Sir Walter Scott, and James Fenimore Cooper are the great trio here, with interesting differences in treatment in stage form; Bulwer's books became melo-drama, Cooper's were transformed into spectacle and dance drama, while Scott's were made into operas. Nothing in the record surpasses the popularity of the English operas based on Scott's romances.

Besides these major and more or less literary performances there was a mass of things written and produced for which neither author nor producer could claim any lasting merit. Many of them were the results of hurry and exigency--deliberate fillers which lived beyond their moment by accident if at all, or died at once. But J. R. Planché lifted vaudeville out of the muck and demonstrated the possibilities of good burlesque and the eye-filling satisfactions of spectacle and extravaganza. These all belong to the genre melo-drama which had been forced into life in the non-patent theatres, and which within a generation assumed protean qualities. Their materials came from many sources, and their forms so often overlapped that it is difficult to classify them. New and often coined terms suggest the inventiveness of their creators--comedietta, burlesque burletta, sketch, operatic melo-drama, operetta.

Planché was the most versatile of several authors of these hybrid types which grew out of an interest in staging as well as the matter of the play. Fifteen titles from him in the St. Charles record represent a libretto to a well-known opera, two burlesque burlettas, one very colorful melodrama written expressly for Celeste, another picture-drama based on three famous canvases, a comedy on an eighteenth century hero of actual history, an after-piece adapted from the French, and five farces--a total of seventy-six performances in this house.

The names of a dozen other creators of ephemeral entertainment follow close upon Planché's. Next perhaps in variety of

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[1] It is not clear whether Poole's play Atonement; or, The God Daughter in the St. Charles record is the same as a play later made from Les Miserables. Another title from Hugo, La Tour de Nesle was from his own pen.

effort was the American author Bayle Bernard with a dozen titles that range from dramatized novels and spectacles, through melodrama and "character" plays—native American and Irish—to farce; twelve titles, in eighty-three performances. J. B. Buckstone with less variety in type of product leads in number of titles, with eighteen in ninety-nine scheduled performances. The list includes among other producers of mixed forms the young American, N. H. Bannister who occasionally attempted serious drama and made melodrama, as in England's Iron Days, W. T. Moncrief who produced farces and "characters," Charles Dance and R. B. Peake who wrote melo-drama and farce. Samuel Beazley, Charles Selby, James Kenney, and Joseph Lunn were writers of farce altogether, each of them with two or more titles of very great popularity. John Poole comes in chiefly for one of his titles which won spectacular success in England and comparable popularity in America—Paul Pry, a farce-comedy which gave especial opportunity to comedians who could sing. The line of famous comedians who starred in it successively suggests the reason for its vogue. In New Orleans it was the favorite vehicle for George H. Holland who used it often in benefits, and with H. J. Finn who employed it for his debut there in 1836.[1]

Several of the type plays of the century are represented in Caldwell's record, and need perhaps passing attention. The emphasis of frequency was on the spectacle play, which included much that was not current fiction such as those made from Cooper's novels. It is not possible here to trace their varied sources, but the nature of some of the popular extravaganzas will be evident from the record. One extremely successful spectacle was made from Poltock's imitation of the Robinson Crusoe material in Peter Wilkins, produced eight times during Caldwell's first season and forty-odd times in the subsequent years. It was a favorite vehicle for both men and women, and its impersonators in America

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[1]Use of the figure of the good-natured intruder and his lore and allusions to the past suggest wide diffusion. The London Theatrical Observer for years ran a full-page advertisement of gossip about a number of the bourgeois entertainment houses, in the phraseology of Paul Pry, and signed with his name. Two casual allusions in American writers not greatly interested in the theatre suggest more: Hawthorne in "Sights from a Steeple" considers the desirability of a spiritualized Paul Pry who might see into human hearts; Lowell refers to the new interest in Milton about 1825 as due to his sudden reappearance in the mode of Paul Pry popping in "to tell us what he has been doing."

include such names as Chapman, Placide, and Holland in the role of Nicodemus Crowquil the bewildered commoner lost in the strange setting, Mrs. Barrett, Celeste, and Charlotte Cushman, in the part of the ubiquitous Peter or of the flying maiden Yourakee. Its machinery of flying islanders, wild men, maidens in distress, caves and mountains made up a delectable product for the caterers to avid appetites, and audiences apparently consumed it eagerly year after year. The French Spy, a military spectacle illustrates other qualities. It is slight in plot but so filled with spectacular features in setting and costume that it made an immediate appeal to the eye. Its lure for the actress was its multiple roles which gave the star of the program a display of histrionic versatility and no doubt made her thrice a heroine to the spectator. Its plot ingredients include a French army, a fleet at anchor, a maiden disguised as the French spy, Henri, a wild Arab who counter-checks the spy, a mad boy, together with a secret passage, a dungeon, a fortress, a Moorish tower, battles between whole armies, and single combats, the explosion of a mine—and the final triumph of the French through the cleverness of the spy! Other titles suggest the nature of the materials—The Wizard Skiff; or, the Tongueless Pirate Boy, "a nautical melo-dramatic Romance in three grand acts and twelve tableaux"; The Dumb Brigand; or, The Dark Gondolier, "written especially for Mlle. Celeste and played by her in the principal theatres of Europe and America"; The Moorish Page, The Devil's Daughter, and The Cataract of the Ganges, with a real waterfall. A common feature in all these performances was the appearance of the dancer in triple or even in quadruple roles. The publicity possibilities of such programs were duly stressed in the printed programs, as the following illustrates:

Alexa, a Greek girl . . . . . Mlle. Celeste!
Alexis, a Greek boy . . . . . Mlle. Celeste!!
Agata, a wandering Zingaroo . . . . . Mlle. Celeste!!!

Some of the dance spectacles had remote religious origins, no doubt, and the dances still had traces of a spiritual symbolism. Most notable of this type was Fanny Ellsler's piéce de resistance Le Dieu et la Bayadere in which she impersonated the inspired dancing girl so effectively that even sober critics felt the uplift of ecstasy. Some of these dance-dramas bring fragments of several mythologies to mind, in such titles as The Mountain Sylph, St. Mary's Eve, St. George and The Dragon.

The equestrian spectacles emphasized the daring and the masculine rather than the spiritual and the sentimental, and they made possible for Caldwell a display of the unusual equipment of his house. During the early weeks of the season of 1841-42 which

opened with this type of performance the St. Charles was really a duplicate of Astley's famous circus in London, except that on the same evening the house was theatre as well as circus. For the spectacle the seats of the pit were folded down and a false arena was presented just below the dress circle. During intermissions which the audience spent in the adjoining arcade the seats were restored and the curtain of the regular stage was drawn for the comedy or afterpiece of a conventional theatre evening. El Hyder, The Forty Thieves, Timour the Tartar suggest the oriental quality aimed at in these performances. More than a score of titles and some two hundred and fifty among the various spectacles demonstrate a taste for the unconventional at least. Related also were the plays which featured other animals or animal parts. The Forest of Bondy; or, The Dog of Montargis and The Murdered Boatman and His Dog, presented in 1841, featured "the dog Bruin." The play called Philip Quarl and His Monkey was acted by the Woods, father and son, the part of the monkey interpreted by Master Wood. These plays all had large elements of pantomime, and some of the titles tantalizingly untraceable otherwise probably are in the lost annals of circus pantomime. The New Orleans list so unclassed includes a "comic pantomime" The Grateful Lion on the Androcles legend, The Red Indian and His Dog, and The Clown Turned Dentist.

The three kinds of "character" plays popular in this early period were conspicuously associated with the names of their authors or adapters. During the first season of the St. Charles, G. H. Hill, the Yankee impersonator, appeared in seven of the plays of this type, four of which had been written for him. Later seasons brought Dan Marble and James H. Hackett in further titles and some additions to the list, the most notable of which was Samuel Woodworth's Forest Rose.

Irish character plays in the record are represented by Tyrone Power who had runs at the St. Charles during the seasons of 1839-40 and 1840-41 in a series of thirteen plays which were largely one-act farces, and most of them written for Power by such adapters as Bayle Bernard, Samuel Lover, and J. B. Buckstone, with two of Power's own arrangement.

The third type, the negro play represented by the "Jim Crow" impersonations of Thomas D. Rice, was almost wholly of farces, most of them probably written by Rice himself. Rice filled an engagement in these song-and-dance numbers during the last season of the St. Charles, in the roles he was then beginning to popularize by his inimitable impersonations. The meagre data on these farces makes it difficult to see the reasons for the vogue Rice enjoyed except as one judges from the appeal of black-face vaudeville today.

American drama of more serious nature and rather more enduring quality comes in with the names of our few writers of the early nineteenth century. John Howard Payne's four major plays had productions as follows: Charles the Second, eleven times, Therese, ten times, Clari, five, and Brutus, two. N. P. Willis' two plays written for certain actors, Tortesa and Bianca Visconti had productions in New Orleans soon after their publication. M. M. Noah's two plays, The Wandering Boys and She Would Be a Soldier were very popular because of their sentimentality and because they gave unusual parts to actresses. Two of the Forrest prize plays—Stone's Metamora and Bird's The Gladiator were produced once each during Forrest's engagement in the spring of 1839. Charlotte Barnes' melo-drama Lafitte the Pirate of the Gulf was extravagantly popular in New Orleans because of its strong local interest, and perhaps because the Barnes family acted its three major roles; it was always elaborately outlined in the programs and produced with illustrative music.

Caldwell seized upon the New Orleans taste for music by making opera a conspicuous feature of his management. The most individual achievement of his first season was the introduction of Italian opera sung in Italian by the company which had recently brought its repertory to London and established a great vogue for opera there. Marked favorites among productions in New Orleans were Norma, Zelmira, Il Pirata, and Otello. The next season added Montechi e Capuleti, Sermiramide, Il Tancredi, and Donna Caritea, more Rossini and Bellini and all of quite recent composition. The third great season for Italian opera, 1841-42, brought the Sequin troupe with added popularity for Norma, and new titles in La Sonnambula, Fra Diavolo, and others chiefly of the modern Italian school.[1] Meantime, and throughout the seasons, Caldwell's stock company produced opera in English, scores English in origin and some translations. Favored ones in the English form were John of Paris, The Marriage of Figaro, and The Barber of Seville. Two operas in English based on Italian sources were The National Guard, from Auber's La Fiancee, and Cinderella from Rossini's La Cenerentola. Very large part of the enthusiasm was given to the English operas made by several hands from the novels of Sir Walter Scott. And there was an uncounted lot of near-operas and song dramas which grew from the same interest. It is to be noticed

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[1] Only two German operas come into the record, Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro and Weber's Der Freischutz, and they were both sung in English. Many of the orchestra's overtures, however, were from German operas.

that Caldwell left French opera to its legitimate home in the Théâtre Orléans.

This represents the varied fare of the usual programs. But almost every season witnessed certain "occasional" programs which form an interesting and amusing item here and there in the whole. One such was the Christmas program. The traditional George Barnwell was an almost invariable feature for that day, and it was usually combined with a spectacle and feature songs. The first season added Celeste in the Wept of Wish-ton-Wish and dances; the second added the opera Cinderella with the Italian company. Others show combinations with Peter Wilkins and Aladdin. The two seasons which omit George Barnwell substitute irresistible features in The Jewess, in 1838, and a medley of numbers by Tyrone Power in 1840.

The eighth of January since the date of Jackson's victory has been a time of celebration in New Orleans. The theatre of the earlier time never missed the opportunity to add its share to the community's tribute—perhaps because the managers knew the value of such drawing cards. Often the note of patriotism was struck days ahead and the program of the eighth became really a climax. On January first of the season 1835-36 there appeared program elements which preluded "the glorious eighth," for on that night James Murdock rendered a "patriotic recitation of John Adams' speech on the Declaration of Independence," and after Celeste's ballet the program concluded with "Capt. S. Glover's patriotic play The Cradle of Liberty." On the eighth in addition to the spectacle The Devil's Daughter, there was a comic song by H. J. Finn "The Creole Convention," and Charlotte Cushman recited an address called "The Standard of Liberty," while the orchestra played a composition "The Battle of New Orleans" written by Laroque "according to historical events." The elaboration of the concept was emphasized by a Program of the Battle in the day's bills as detailed as the synopses of operas or extravaganzas. Frequently the orchestra featured national airs on December 23 and January 1 in preparation for the big program of the eighth. Outlines of that day's program for other seasons illustrate the point further:

For 1837 - "A variety of Entertainments"

For 1838 - The Battle of Austerlitz
A national ode for the occasion
Singing and Dancing

For 1839 - The Battle of Bunker Hill
Prize National address,
spoken by Mrs. Farren
National Airs by the Full Orchestra

For 1840 - Address on the Day by Mr. Field
The National anthem by whole company
Peter Wilkins

The St. Charles regularly scheduled certain programs for children's nights, and the usual feature was a spectacle like Peter Wilkins or Blue Beard with dances, or pantomimes with song features. On these nights the featured numbers were put first on the program so as to let the young spectators out for early bed time, and the farce or afterpiece was given after the intermission. This was an extension, of course, of the juvenile evenings at Covent Garden which featured pantomime. Engagements of dancers usually included a juvenile program, and at least one night of the Jewess was called children's evening.

Caldwell habitually gave his house for one charity benefit each year and the programs for those times were in the nature of special affairs. The chief object of his charity was an asylum for orphan boys. Caldwell usually appeared on these programs in one of his favorite roles, and the best of the feminine talent of his stock company aided him. The male roles except Caldwell's lead were invariably taken by citizens who thereby showed their interest. A typical program is this, for May 25, 1837:

Laugh When You Can

Gossamer . . . . . Mr. Caldwell
Other male roles . . . . . Amateurs
Mrs. Mortimer . . . . . Mrs. Bannister
Emily . . . . . Mrs. Shaw
Miss Gloomy . . . . . Mrs. Saunders

Previous to the play an address by one of the directors of the Institution

Comic song . . . . . by an amateur
"The Soldier's Tear" . . . by an amateur
Grand Overture to La Dame Blanche
Musical farce (1st time to be given here)

An Uncle Too Many

All male roles . . . . . Amateurs
Lady Capsicum . . . . . Mrs. Saunders
Mary Ann . . . . . Miss Melton

A fire which threatened to destroy the St. Charles in 1839 led Caldwell to a typical gesture in this elaborate program, on January 12—

Program
for
The Firemen's Charitable Association

An appropriate address, written by James Rees,
recited by . . . . J. A. Scott

An Overture . . . . . by Orchestra

Laugh When You Can

Gossamer, the laughing philosopher . . J. M. Caldwell
Mortimer . . . . . M. Pearson
Mrs. Mortimer . . . . . Mrs. Farren

Song, "The Striped Pig" . . . . . Mr. Finn
Song, "Wedlock is a Ticklish Thing" . Mr. Holland

Comic Glee, "Mynheer Von Dunck" . . .
Messers Plumer, Archer and Page

National Airs . . . . . Orchestra
Grand Pas Seul . . . . . Mlle. Ravenot
Song, "Come Brave the Sea With Me" . . Mrs. DeBar
Song, "Huzza for Columbia" . . . . . Mr. Williamson
"Hail Columbia" . . . . . by Whole Company

To conclude with a new farce

Naval Engagements

Ad. Kingston . . . . . Mr. Finn
Lieutenant Kingston . . . Mr. Browne
Short . . . . . Mr. S. Cowell
Mrs. Pontifex . . . . . Mrs. Smith

A unique special feature was one added to the benefit program for Mr. and Mrs. N. H. Bannister on May 13, 1837. One play on the program was a local "comic burletta" by the young author and called Life in New Orleans. The advertisements announced and the program verified a new feature: "Old Corn Meal is to drive across and around the stage in his real 'dug out' and sing his favorite melodies. Himself, horse and cart are to be introduced in a new piece . . . . in which many public characters are also to figure." The cast ran—

Homo . . . . . Mr. Bannister
The Gentleman in Black . . Mr. Williams
Dashaway (with song) . . . Mr. Page
Corn Meal Man
(horse and cart) . . Old Corn Meal
Mrs. Homo . . . . . Mrs. Bannister

The supposition is that "Old Corn Meal" was a vendor of the hot corn cakes of an early day, a figure certainly known by everybody as a sort of local pet. There is an analogy today in the praline women in New Orleans, and in drama, in the old seller of hot crabs in Porgy.

Several of these features are related to the benefit

performances which were a convention of the early theatre. A consideration in every star's contract was one benefit or more within the limits of the engagement. Stars of big reputation could claim "half clear benefits," as Celeste seems to have done in 1835; others had a percentage of the value of the house on benefit nights.[1] Thomas Abthorpe Cooper had two benefit performances on his farewell engagement. The members of the stock company, to the flute player and the scene painter had benefits at the close of the season. As a rule the benefit notices were single statements by the beneficiary with "respectful attention" called to the program projected. In the cases of favorites the newspapers made rather extravagant advance comment on these appeals to good will and whenever the news was available afterward they quoted the profits, with comments. Benefit nights were occasions for generosity among the actors as well as opportunities for the community to show its appreciation. Usually the strength of the company was exerted for the featured actor, and in many instances a visiting star appeared an extra time if his run expired near a benefit night for some of the company. Benefit programs usually presented the beneficiary in his most popular role, and quite often selected scenes from a number of plays brought out several of the best characterizations of other actors as well. A benefit for Barton, whose favored roles were Shakespearean, presented this program, April 9, 1840—

King Lear - Act I

Lear	Mr. Barton
Edgar	Mr. Field
Cordelia	Mrs. Field

Much Ado About Nothing - Act II

Benedick	Mr. Barrett
Beatrice	Mrs. Stuart

Hamlet - Act III

Hamlet	Mr. Barton
Queen	Mrs. Stuart

Macbeth - Act IV

Macbeth	Mr. Barton

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[1] Tantalizingly little is obtainable here. The Bee of September 25, 1835 has this—"Mr. Caldwell has engaged Mlle. Celeste for four successive weeks for 3,000 dollars cash and two half clear benefits."

Macduff . . . . Mr. Field
Lady Macbeth . . Mrs. Stuart

Grand Shakespearean Procession:
tableaux from 15 plays

Frightened to Death
Mumps . . . . . Mr. Holland

In Dan Marble's benefit of January 25, 1842, he appeared in eight roles from as many plays, a sort of pot-pourri from his repertoire. Many were of this sort, in drama and opera.

The familiarity with which a permanent stock member approached his public, and an illustration at the same time of the quality of a one-man show some benefits were, is quaintly demonstrated in George H. Holland's favorite card which appeared almost seasonally: a picture of Paul Pry and a very extravagant column of nonsense in which he brought in the titles of his numbers and the names of assisting performers, with a final gesture—"I trust I shall have the opportunity of congratulating my numerous friends on their good fortune in having secured early seats." His other popular program featuring "Whims of a comedian" in which "Mr. Holland will impersonate twelve characters," with songs, dances, and anecdotes is really only good vaudeville.

Much of this suggests that the cosmopolitanism of New Orleans had a blend also of the town. Caldwell and the people who helped him to run one of the biggest businesses of the place were after all members of a commonwealth. Their profession kept them critically before the public which was their patron. The nature of the press comments emphasizes this relationship. There is evident through the whole time an alertness to Caldwell's efforts which shows a skepticism about the man even while it reveals a jealous pride in the things he attempted. He was constantly criticized for the quality of his company and the nature of his productions, almost as constantly lauded for the excellence of his orchestra and the equipment and management of his house. And always there was a consciousness that things in the St. Charles were naturally done with an éclat true of the theatre in only two or three other cities in the country.

Press comment on the theatre was not often on the drama. Actors were commented on for their voices and their dress, and for their reading of well known passages. Women were nearly always praised for their personal charm and the sweetness of their impersonations; and recurrent regret or disapproval was voiced for the actresses who attempted masculine roles. Except for opera which was responded to as an art, the recommendations

of the reporters were for the support of attractive and skillful persons in directly human mediums.

Caldwell was aware of the human values in his business and he gave to the press always just enough personal items to lure interest. He knew also the publicity values of local personal news. One wonders now whether guests at the St. Charles happened to come on certain evenings, or whether announcements were not planned at times of ebbing attendance to whet a new interest. At any rate opportunities were not wasted. At one time the trick was turned apropos a balloonist, who threatened no doubt to be a counter attraction, by a note in the advertisements of the day that "the intrepid Clayton" had been invited to the theatre where he might "receive the congratulations of his friends." Again the Indian chief of a neighboring encampment with six of his braves were announced as guests of the manager, and their titles were enlarged upon in the news story--with such results as were desired, for

> "The visit of the Indian chiefs attracted a large audience to the St. Charles on Friday evening. The untutored savages exhibited a high degree of interest in the entertainment, especially in the comicalities of Holland and Barrett. Sometimes their mirth was so uncontrollable . . . . that commencing in a low murmur, it broke into whoops and yells as amusing to the pale faces as were the performances on the stage."

One speculates on the kinship of this audience to the "fine and fashionable array of auditors" many of whom were guests on another such inspired evening when the firemen were honored. The volunteer fire company represented the sons and fathers of New Orleans' first families, and while such a gesture may have been a gracious courtesy it was also excellent business policy.

The body of verse tributes, all long and most of them banal, written to Caldwell and on his house and its actors at one time and another registers the response of the town to his enterprise. He was a shrewd business man, as a theatrical manager must be, and his personal taste no doubt often surrendered to the pressure of the box office, but his story is far from a record of defeat. The St. Charles was simply the chief of many efforts he made to be a part of the life of his adopted city, and its history is an important reflection of the culture of New Orleans in his day.